School of Excellence in Education Teachers and Principals Awarded for Student Achievement

The San Antonio School of Excellence in Education (SEE), a charter school district, will implement Teacher and Principals Awarded for Student Achievement (TAPASA), a performance-based incentive program designed to increase student achievement. TAPASA incorporates professional development, teacher-to-student and teacher-to-teacher mentoring programs, and a recruitment and retention system. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), a series of benchmarks and end-of-course tests will be used to measure student achievement.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

SEE, a Texas Education Agency (TEA) accredited, open-enrollment charter school district, opened in 1998 and serves approximately 3,000 students on seven campuses. SEE is a high-need urban school district – 81 percent of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. Fifty-three percent of the students are Hispanic; 40 percent are African American; less than 1 percent are Native American or Asian; and 4 percent are white (non-Hispanic). In the 2005-06 school year, all of the SEE campuses met TEA requirements and had an "Academically Acceptable" rating. Teacher salaries are lower in SEE than in neighboring districts, which contributes to a high rate of attrition among teachers who obtain certification while working in the district. Fifty percent of these teachers transfer to another district for a 32-percent salary increase. SEE is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization and is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by a Superintendent.

Background

TAPASA's goal is to increase student achievement by creating a performance-based system to reward teachers and principals for their effectiveness in the classroom. The four main objectives of the project are to: (1) increase student achievement so that all current campuses are "Exemplary," and all new campus are "Recognized" within 5 years of implementation of the incentive plan, (2) increase student achievement by developing strategies that result in filling all of the difficult-to-staff areas with highly qualified teachers and reducing the voluntary turnover rate within 5 years, (3) improve student learning and achievement by providing teachers with continuous support and feedback through biweekly classroom observations and formative evaluations throughout the year, and (4) foster a supportive atmosphere for student achievement by creating a teacher-student mentor program for all students who are deficient in at least one subject area and institute a teacher-to-teacher mentor program for all new teachers.

LOCATION(S)	San Antonio, Texas
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 1: $684,373 5-year total: $3,204,450
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	Wexford, Inc.

Incentives

SEE will develop and evaluate a performance-based incentive menu that builds on the current teacher and principal salary structure. The TAPASA program will link teacher salaries to student achievement, multiple observations of teacher performance, and additional duties taken on by teachers. In preparation for the grant proposal, key stakeholders developed main and secondary menus of criteria for teachers and principals to qualify for the incentives. The main menu includes criteria related to gains in student achievement for the school, class, and targeted subgroups of students. The main menu also includes incentives to recruit highly qualified math and science teachers.

The secondary menu includes serving as a mentor to teachers or a mentor who works with students and receives high ratings on principal/team evaluations. The secondary menu also includes criteria for principals, including gains in student achievement, completing teacher observations and evaluations, scores on Baldrige criteria from outside evaluations, and ratings from teachers and parents. Additionally, Teacher Incentive Funds will add 3 workdays to the science and mathematics teachers' contracts for additional training time on content-specific instructional strategies and for vertical collaboration time across levels.

Evaluation

The evaluation will use a total quality management (TQM) approach, which will provide for continuous feedback for program improvement. It will also provide data for formative and summative evaluations. Wexford, Inc., the external evaluator, will assess the management, quality, and effectiveness and impact of the project. A mixed methods approach will be used and will result in a descriptive, formative, implementation, and impact evaluation of the project. The specific areas to be evaluated include management structure and effectiveness, the extent to which key goals and objectives are met, customer satisfaction, perception and effectiveness of the services, and effectiveness of the design components of the models of supportive pay for teachers and principals.

Resources

SEE has budgeted $40,000 to support bonuses for junior high and high school math teachers. Also budgeted is $15,000 for extra duty stipends. Funding sources to meet the match requirements include funds from Title I, Title II, and IDEA, reallocated general operating funds, and monetary donations from individuals and businesses.

SEE will fulfill the 75 percent matching requirement by year 5 and has the infrastructure of tenured district-level leadership to support and maintain TAPASA.

Data Systems

The district has an extensive technology department located on every campus. Members of the technology staff train teachers on three data management systems. These systems are used to track student achievement based on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and the Texas Primary Reading Inventory. Public Education Information Management System collects information on student demographics and performance; personnel; financial; and organizational information. The Regional Service Centers Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) is a comprehensive micro/mini computer software package that works in conjunction with TEA's request for data. The RSCCC systems include accounting information related to payroll and budget, as well as information on student attendance, grades, scheduling, discipline, and special education management. GradeSpeed, which can be accessed by teachers, parents, and administrators, is a tool to build lesson plans as well as track assignments and grades.